



WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING

Presidential Transition at the Campaign for College Opportunity

On March 28, 2024, the Campaign for College Opportunity announced that Michele Siqueiros will step down as President of the organization effective June 30th, 2024 after 20 years of courageous service with the Campaign. The Board of Directors selected Jessie Ryan, currently Executive Vice President, as President, effective July 1st, 2024. Students, partners, and advocates shared an outpour of support:

Students

“Michele Siqueiros leaves behind an enduring mark on California's higher education landscape. Her visionary leadership at the Campaign for College Opportunity has empowered countless students, making education more accessible and equitable. As a mother who admirably balanced her responsibilities, Michele inspired many women by showing that motherhood doesn't define limits but rather fuels determination. Her unwavering commitment, even amidst legislative sessions, makes her a true force for students everywhere and a beacon for working mothers. While Michele will be missed dearly, wherever her journey takes her next, those fortunate to have her will undoubtedly benefit from her exceptional leadership.

Congratulations to Jessie Ryan on her well-deserved appointment as the next President of the Campaign for College Opportunity. Jessie's ability to balance motherhood and work commitments, dedicating time to her family while passionately driving initiatives for student success, truly embodies her commitment to both her personal and professional endeavors. Her warmth and affirmation underscore her approachable nature and dedication to fostering collaboration. Jessie's depth of knowledge, passion, and exceptional intelligence will undoubtedly propel the Campaign forward, ensuring continued innovation and inclusivity in higher education. I am confident that under her leadership, the Campaign will reach new heights, positively impacting the lives of California students.”

MARIA LINARES | Trustee Emerita '21-23, California State University

"I am deeply thankful to Michele and the Campaign for College Opportunity team. The Campaign has been steadfast allies to California's college students over the past two decades and has been critical in getting transformational legislation signed into law. More personally, working alongside the Campaign as a student advocate during the Great Recession helped give me a solid foundation for my career in public policy and advocacy. Here's to Michele for her incredible work on behalf of higher education in California, and congratulations to Jessie (an exceptional advocate in her own right) for being selected as the next President of the Campaign for College Opportunity."

CHRIS CHAVEZ | President, California State Student Association 2010-11

Partners

"Michele's legacy is undeniably a positive one for California students. Over the past 20 years, her leadership and The Campaign for College Opportunity's work have been instrumental in making college access and success a priority for the state's leadership and in securing important wins that help more students achieve their postsecondary dreams. Put simply, much of the state's progress would not have been possible without Michele's acumen and leadership and the state owes her a debt of gratitude.

Congratulations to Jessie Ryan on her selection as The Campaign for College Opportunity's next President! As long-standing partners in this work, I have no doubt our collaborative efforts will continue to support students under her leadership. I am excited to see what this next chapter brings for the Campaign with such a well-connected and dedicated leader at the helm."

CHRISTOPHER NELLUM, Ph.D. | Executive Director, Ed Trust—West

"I am deeply inspired by Jessie Ryan's selection as the next President of the Campaign for College Opportunity. Her unwavering dedication to advancing equity and justice in higher education, alongside our shared values, truly embodies the spirit of leadership that has been transforming lives for a generation.

I am humbled to have served alongside her as school board members in the greater Sacramento community, creating the opportunities for educational excellence for communities who are often left behind. I am looking forward to continuing our work to build a future where all children will have the opportunity to fulfill their dreams, as she takes on this role."

JACKIE THU-HUONG WONG | Executive Director, First Five California

"Jessie Ryan exemplifies true leadership, focusing not only on systemic changes but also on uplifting others. She is committed to ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background, so that they may all reach their full potential."

LENA TRAN, Ph.D. | President, Columbia College

State and higher education leaders

"California owes a debt of gratitude to Michele Siqueiros for her two decades of unwavering leadership on behalf of students. Jessie Ryan is an incredible policy leader, and I am confident she will build on Michele's legacy — championing critical student-centered reforms and empowering hundreds of thousands of families. I look forward to our continued work with Jessie and the Campaign for College Opportunity as we develop a transformative Master Plan for Career Education and ensure all students and families have the resources they need to succeed."

GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM | State of California

"A voice for the voiceless. That's immediately what comes to mind when I think of Michele's legacy. She's a fierce champion for underserved populations and has been committed to making college available to ALL Californians. Because of her persistence and perseverance over the last 20 years, she's made it possible for thousands of students to go to college. And in the process, she's transformed the Campaign for College Opportunity into a powerhouse in the higher education landscape in California.

I am super excited that Jessie Ryan is being named the new president of the Campaign for College Opportunity. Jessie has spent nearly two decades driving the transformational equity-minded policy work that the Campaign is known for. There's no one more qualified to boldly lead the organization into the future. Jessie has devoted her professional life to making sure Californians have access to higher education and are able follow their dreams. I look forward with anticipation to her leadership in this new chapter for the Campaign."

SONYA CHRISTIAN, Ph.D. | Chancellor, California Community Colleges

"It takes a genuine leader to know when to pass the baton, and Michele Siqueiros is among the best. Michele has built from scratch one of the country's most influential higher education advocacy organizations razor focused on racial equity. Her unapologetic advocacy throughout her 20 years with the Campaign has transformed thousands of students' lives for a better California and America. I am eager for the Campaign's and Michele's next era of impact, and know that her legacy will resound for generations to come.

I cannot think of a more capable and passionate leader to take the reins of the Campaign than Jessie Ryan. Her policy expertise and tenacity will guide the Campaign into a new era of impact in California."

ELOY ORTIZ OAKLEY | President & CEO, The College Futures Foundation

"I commend Michele for making this monumental decision and celebrate her transformational role leading the Campaign for College Opportunity over the past 20 years. Michele will no doubt continue to be a trailblazing leader wherever she decides to focus her many talents, and I am confident that the Campaign will continue to champion victories for California students. Congratulations, Michele! You will be a change-driver wherever you go.

Congratulations to the Campaign for College Opportunity for appointing Jessie Ryan to lead this remarkable organization and continue the extraordinary work and leadership in California higher education. Though there are not many people who can follow in Michele's footsteps, Jessie is one of them. She is an incredible leader who doesn't cower in the face of adversity. I applaud the wisdom of the Campaign and Michele for prioritizing a smooth transition and pulling in a leader who has the vision, strength, and ability to take the organization to the next level."

MARLENE GARCIA | Executive Director, California Student Aid Commission

"UC rightfully takes great pride in the transformative impact it has on the lives of our students. For 20 years, Michele Siqueiros has been an amazing partner to UC and all California's systems of higher education. Michele has been a tireless voice and champion in the effort to make the dream of college opportunity real for every California student. My colleagues and I will miss Michele, but we know that her incredible leadership has left the Campaign for College Opportunity in a strong place to continue its important work into the future."

RICHARD LEIB | Chair, University of California Board of Regents

"I know that this decision could not have been made lightly and without a lot of thought by Michele. That is why I applaud her in this decision and congratulate her on so many accomplishments that have always been student centric. Michele Siqueiros has been an unwavering advocate for students, amplifying the voices of those unheard and those that need the most representation.

I look forward to working with her successor, Jessie Ryan. Jessie's proven record of higher education advocacy, from streamlining transfer pathways to championing equity reforms, signals a promising future for the Campaign for College Opportunity. In continued partnership with the Campaign for College Opportunity, I know our policy work and commitment to first-generation students, underserved students, undocumented students, and transfer students will ensure that higher education is equitable, affordable, and achievable.

KRISTEN SOARES | President, Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities

"I join a large chorus of well-wishers in thanking Michele for her leadership of the Campaign for College Opportunity over the last twenty years. Under Michele's leadership, the Campaign inspired significant policy changes that helped ALL California students obtain meaningful higher education access.

I am thrilled that Jessie Ryan will continue her work at the Campaign as the next President. Jessie's personal story and commitment to higher education ground all her work. I'm excited to see what Jessie brings for the next chapter of the Campaign's work."

AMY COSTA | President, California Community Colleges Board of Governors

"Michele Siqueiros has achieved impactful work at the helm of the Campaign, and I am excited to see a seamless leadership transition with the announcement that Jessie will be stepping up as President of the Campaign. I cannot think of a better leader than Jessie who has been at the side of Michele for 19 years. Jessie Ryan has been a respected thought leader in so many spaces and I am over the moon that she will be taking over the reins at the Campaign."

PAMELA HAYNES | Immediate Past President, California Community College Board of Governors

Philanthropic partners

“Michele has been an absolutely stunning leader for students and equity and she will be missed. Whether it’s been about specific numbers in the state budget, or the broad vision ensuring that every Californian can secure the postsecondary credentials they need, Michele has been a foundational part of Kresge’s work in our focus state of California and, as a consequence, our work across the country. Michele has made a big difference in the lives of so many people and we are so grateful for her leadership.

Although we will miss Michele, we are thrilled that Jessie will be taking over as President of the Campaign, a close and trusted partner of the Kresge Foundation. Jessie, a product of California community colleges and the Cal State system, understands the challenges and opportunities of the California higher education system and has been integral to some of the most important statewide reforms, including Associate Degrees for Transfer. Jessie’s experience also includes leadership in the K-12 system, too, giving her a broad view of the challenges so many California students face as they hope to obtain a college degree. We know Jessie’s experiences will ensure that the Campaign will continue the leadership that has distinguished it over the past 20 years.”

WILLIAM MOSES | Managing Director, Kresge Foundation

“Under her steady and courageous leadership, Michele Siqueiros has successfully transformed the Campaign into a powerhouse advocacy organization, unapologetically fighting for students traditionally furthest from opportunity and advancing significant system-level changes at the state’s postsecondary institutions on their behalf. Generations of students will feel Michele’s positive impact for years to come.

For over a decade, Jessie Ryan has built and valiantly led the Campaign’s advocacy operation, creating broad-based statewide coalitions and deploying innovative advocacy strategies that have resulted in historic state policy reforms supporting student success. As the chief strategist and architect of the Campaign’s major policy victories, Jessie is a proven executive leader who is well poised to lead the Campaign as its next president, continuing to defend and advance student-centered policies and institutional changes.”

MAX ESPINOZA | Senior Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

“What Michele Siqueiros has built at the Campaign for College Opportunity is extraordinary, and it has been a great privilege for me to have been among Michele’s legions of supporters. Her impact on higher education — not just in California, but nationally — will resonate for decades to come. I was especially pleased to see that Michele received the prestigious Irvine Leadership Award this year. I had the opportunity to chair the selection committee for two years when this recognition first started while I served on The Irvine Foundation’s Board of Directors. It is a full circle moment to now see Michele’s 20 years of impact with the Campaign honored, and I cannot think of anyone more deserving.”

PETER J. TAYLOR | Former President, ECMC Foundation

“When it comes to Michele Siqueiros, two words come to mind: LIVING LEGEND. She has been a gift to educational equity in California and the nation. The Campaign for College Opportunity – now celebrating 20 years of student-centered impact – is in great hands. I look forward to our continued partnership as we work towards a shared goal of improving student outcomes and ensuring that race, ethnicity, and income are not predictors of college success.”

PATRICK MEVTHIN | Director of Postsecondary Success and Interim Director of Pathways, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

“Michele's legacy cannot be overstated. She is an unflinching advocate for students of color in California and has influenced policy changes that will advance the trajectory of countless lives for generations to come. Her tireless work in California spreads across the nation, inspiring advocates, and learners from all walks of life. We are grateful for Michele's longtime partnership with Lumina Foundation and look forward to continued excellence from the Campaign for College Opportunity under Jessie's leadership.”

MICHELLE ASHA COOPER, Ph.D. | Vice President for Public Policy and Executive Director, Lumina Foundation